

# NEWS

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## California Roadways Have Never Been Safer

### Death Rate Drops to Record Low

(SACRAMENTO) The number of people killed per 100 million miles driven on California roadways has dropped to the lowest level in history. The newly released Mileage Death Rate (MDR) is 1.18 deaths per 100 million miles driven. The numbers are based on 2007 data. The previous MDR was 1.27 for 2006.

“This is the direct result of a successful partnership between the state’s traffic safety professionals at all levels of government, the news media and the general public. It proves we can change behavior for the better if we all work together,” said Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (BTH) Secretary Dale E. Bonner as he announced the new figures.

“It’s important to note that these aren’t just abstract numbers. They represent lives saved of real people in California,” stated California Highway Patrol Deputy Commissioner Skip Carter.

To arrive at the annual MDR figure, CHP fatality data for the year is divided by Caltrans’ estimated number of miles driven that year in California. The 2007 MDR is about one tenth of the MDR in 1933 when California’s population was nearly six million.

“While this is encouraging news, our work is not done. We will continue to focus our efforts until we have eliminated traffic crashes as a major cause of death and injury in California,” added Caltrans Director Will Kempton.

The three major causes of fatal crashes are speeding, not wearing a seat belt, and DUI. They have been the focus of aggressive enforcement and education by traffic safety organizations the past several years.

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“It is no coincidence that the Mileage Death Rate dropped at the same time we had a reduction in alcohol-related crashes,” said state Office of Traffic Safety Director Christopher J. Murphy.

The traffic safety organizations within BTH are not resting on the current success. This Labor Day Weekend, they will be aggressively looking for those who sell alcohol to underage drinkers.

“We’ll have our undercover investigators out in force this weekend and they will have zero tolerance for underage drinking,” said Alcoholic Beverage Control Director Steve Hardy.

One area where there is room for considerable improvement is motorcycle fatalities. The number of registered riders and crashes has bucked the downward trend and are climbing.

"With more riders on the road, we continue to emphasize safe driving practices for new and veteran motorcycle riders," stated Department of Motor Vehicles Deputy Director of Licensing Operations, Mimi Khan. "We are reaching out to folks and urging them to take it slow as they learn to ride."

During the upcoming year, California law enforcement will increase its educational outreach and enforcement efforts to ensure that all motorists safely share the road.

For more information, contact any of the following:

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